

One-day wonders

Country cruisers crush Zimbabwe in one-day clash

WITH THE historic Bradman Oval as the backdrop, the Australian Country XI provided the perfect spectacle on Friday by crushing the touring Zimbabwe team in devastating fashion.

After setting the tourists a modest 198 for victory, the Country XI fielded like men possessed, dominating the more experienced visitors to run out convincing 51 run victors.

On a wicket that provided a bit for both teams, the African raiders were set to run away with it but a brilliant spell of 5/37 by Andrew Starr turned the match on its head and spearheaded the spirited Country XI to an upset victory.

The result is disastrous for the visiting team in the midst of a one-day world series and a dejected Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak was looking for answers following the match.

"On how we went today we won't win another game," he said.

"But the boys really have to pick themselves up and I thought our batting was particularly poor.

"To give credit where it's due though the Country XI bowled and fielded well.

"But still with the calibre of players that we have it's very disappointing to get beaten."

Of even greater concern for the tourists is the fact that they fielded a full strength professional team and to be defeated so resoundingly by a squad of part-timers that haven't played in the same team before is particularly worrying.

The Australian Country XI made a strong start to the match with Cade Brown, 54, Anthony McQuire, 42, and David Todd, 53, giving the home team an ideal getaway.

But a middle-lower order collapse ensued with the next seven batsman crumbling cheaply with only John

Robson, 15, managing to crack double figures.

Spin bowler Viljeon caused the most trouble, taking a top class 4/15 off his ten overs.

Dismissed for 197 in the 49th over, most onlookers assumed Zimbabwe would cruise to victory but the Country XI had other ideas.

And rightfully so, the Zimbabweans had just come off a recent score of 241 off 50 overs against the Windies and a 2-1 series defeat against New Zealand.

But reputations counted for nothing out there and when Alistair Campbell, 4, Guy Whittall, 37, and Carlisle, 8, were dismissed, it looked like it might go down to the wire.

This brought the experienced Flower brothers to the crease and both played a heady innings, giving the Zimbabweans the ascendancy.

The visitors also experienced a middle order collapse and a brave last wicket stand from Streak and Mackay was not enough to salvage the game.

But the day belonged to 24 year old Andrew Starr who stole the show with his match winning 5/37 and he was clearly delighted with his figures following the match.

"It was a good effort and I'm very happy that's for sure," he said.

"There was a bit of movement in the wicket which always helps but I was convinced we were going to do it tough at one stage.

"This is my first year in the Australian country team and it's just a great start."

And as always, the match was strongly supported by locals and superbly put on by the Bradman Trust.

"It's such a lovely pitch and it's very special to play at a place with as much history as this," Streak concluded.



Right on target...Zimbabwe's Grant Flower keeps one out in Friday's international one-dayer against the Country XI at Bradman Oval